

# **Memoirs of a Far East Cult. My time in the Iglesia ni Cristo.**

## **Chapter 1**

This memoir is not for the strong of faith.

A few years ago I'd look at this memoir and turn it away myself because of how strong my faith was.

There are many factors that go into belief; rarely is it pure. If it were, we'd all be rushing to die to get to heaven, but most of us are not. I was strong in the faith. But I was only strong because I blocked everything out that challenged it, critical thinking included.

My faith was confronted after a worship service. He asked why I wasn't an officer anymore. He asked why I was rarely seen in worship service.

I was exhausted from the mental gymnastics. I've run out of tricks to do, and I had to face some ugly truths while I lay there soaking in mental sweat.

I answered and faltered. Not because I was coming up with a lie. I faltered because I had an entire lifetime worth of grievances.

I told him I didn't believe. And I left him dumbfounded. I hopped on to tricycle and said peace.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Who am I?**

I was born in the church. I knew nothing else, but as a kid, I went through Sunday school, and bible indoctrination. I received 28 fundamental lessons establishing the importance of God, Jesus Christ, the Administration running the Church and the importance of its leaders.

Then I was baptized by 12 years old and told this was the only way to salvation from hell on Earth. This is typical.

I became deathly ill. Faith and prayer, and surgery saved my life. My best friend within church was not so lucky. He died of nearly the same thing I did. I never got to process why God would let my best friend die, but not I. God works in mysterious ways.

I became very active in the church, and was a choir member for 25 years. I expressed my gratitude to be allowed to live through singing. It's what galvanized me in that calling for all those years.

Over the years, I tied that feeling of thankfulness to offering. So cheerfully, I donated a few thousand dollars a year to this organization every year. I did it without a second thought. Clearly, I was being blessed because I gave so much "thanks" back. "All the glory belongs to God", they'd say.

However, a few years ago, I noticed a change. The hymns became dark. For a while I put up with it, as many of us officers did. But one by one, many couldn't press away this unsettling feeling. Some had a higher tolerance for it, but some did not.

The office slowly became more and more laborious. We were called many things: we were likened to Slaves or Soldiers of Christ. Whenever duty called we were to answer. And duty called a lot. And if we didn't answer it, we were shamed for it.

Shame and Guilt became a huge part of who we were. We performed, but we were never good enough. There was always something to fix. Always something broken. I took on this guilt. I searched and searched myself, until I ran out of places to search.

So I finally "stepped down" from my first love. I missed the high I would get as I sung my heart away. But I knew all too well, the relationship I kept for so long turned abusive and unhealthy.

I left my robes. For the longest time, I imagined I'd be buried in and my hymnal book. I left them behind. We idealized dying as choir members and being buried in our robes. It meant we gave up our life in service of a higher cause. It was a martyrdom I did not want to be a part of anymore.

So I began my hiatus.

I imagined I would come back eventually when the pressure let off, so I sat as a lay member for months. I imagined that this would help me take a break for a bit, and then maybe, once I was good and some "changes" have blown over, I could come back.

But as a lay member, I began noticing a pattern; a rhetorical pattern that developed over the last few years. There was always four things that the lesson made sure to "constantly" repeat:

- Reminders to give offerings and "special offerings"
- Propagation to drive up membership
- Venerating our Leader, Eduardo V Manalo
- Never forsaking the worship service

After some time of hearing the same take-away from every lesson, every Sunday and Thursday I decided to conduct an analysis. Many people sit and listen and absorb whatever is being told to them, as I've done for years. But for the first time, in my adult life, armed with critical thinking skills, did I really decide to listen.

## Chapter 3

My premise is simple and is the guiding principle I applied to my analysis. I would listen to the doctrines and preaching in every worship service as if I was listening for the first time. I would do so in the following ways:

I would first analyze the rhetoric. How things were said and the context they were said in.

I would also engage in bible study. The Church's method is to ask questions and have the bible verse read. Their answer supports the claim that generated the question. To guard against the church's method of cherry picking verses, I noted the verses in order to reference common interpretations and the context surrounding the verse. Then I would also note down the minister's explanations, and the logic attached to it.

I would then take the data, research it exhaustively, make my notes, and plot it all out. After I did that, I noticed a clear picture emerged.

## Chapter 4

Every lesson begins with the same premise.

The world is getting worse, famines are spreading, evil is rampant, earthquakes in every corner, surely, signs that the end is coming soon. I even remember, distinctly, a statistic that was quoted in a worship service November 17, 2016 "That almost 1 billion people live in poverty of the 7 billion people on earth".

The minister continued to expand on this and said "no matter how many inventions of man and all the science he can make, we still haven't been able to solve poverty. In fact, it's getting worse. Imagine, 1 billion people?" A rhetorical question. No one answered it, but the message was clear: God's word will help you, and not man.

However, this logical progression is deception.

According to the World Bank, the international source of statistics for poverty, the numbers are actually much different from what was quoted. 43% of the world's population was considered poor in the 1980's. It has since dropped down to 9% in the 2010s. In fact for much of written history, the world has been incredibly poor. But we see a rise of income during the Renaissance period. With industrialization in the 1800's, living condition have risen. And in the last 40 years, we have finally seen extreme poverty fall into the single digits.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/policy-research-note-03-ending-extreme-poverty-and-sharing-prosperity-progress-and-policies>

Famine in the 90's was at 18.6%, while it has dropped to 10% in the 2010's. And in underdeveloped countries, it has dropped down in these 30 years, to over 42%. Underdeveloped countries, where I might add, where the INC flourishes.

<http://www.worldhunger.org/2015-world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/>

Earthquakes, too, have not actually increased. Given a hundred year period, ever since the science of seismology has begun, the earth's track record is random. According to the US Geological Survey, there has been no statistically significant rise in earthquakes over time.

<https://www2.usgs.gov/faq/categories/9830/3355%20>

So for the first time, I confirmed my suspicions that the Administration misrepresents ideas at the beginning of each lesson. But for what reasons?

Critical thinking would have me conclude that these Alternative Facts help The Church's overall arguments: humans need not rely on their own thinking, but they must rely on God's path. But if these facts are "alternative" fabrications of the truth, then who is your God?

## **Chapter 5**

### **What is Gaslighting?**

gas-lighting manipulate (someone) by psychological means into questioning their own sanity." In the first episode, Karen Valentine is being gaslighted by her husband" telling members that the world is getting worse creates an artificial demand for stability. The church is there to provide stability. This is why the church gaslights its members. It keeps them coming back to church.

We are often told that there is only salvation in this church. In fact, it is even sung to the sweet sounds of a hymn: "I am the branch, you are the vine, and I would be nothing without you".

If this relationship was between two people, if one partner tells the other partner, "you are nothing without me", how would that feel? The relationship becomes very one sided. All the sudden, there is a power dynamic of oppressor, and oppressed.

If this relationship goes on for long enough, the oppressed person starts to truly believe it. So leaving a relationship that has gotten worse and worse becomes more of an impossibility in their mind.

I know what you'll say. But why would you want to leave Christ? You'd exclaim. That's human relationship. Jesus is perfect. God guides the administration!

I get the fact, that in your world view, that Jesus, and by extension, the administration and our executive minister should be venerated above our own selves. But that is only safe to put your entire being into Christ, if the Christ and God we preach is spotless and blameless. However, they are not.

## Chapter 6

The church quotes the Old Testament a lot. And some favorite verses come from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job and Ezekiel. And as a humanitarian, raised in Christian tradition, that bothers me. A lot. I shall quote Dawkins here:

*The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."*

When I first heard this, it struck a nerve with me. I was ready to dismiss this as the ranting of some Atheist who doesn't know what he's talking about. But as I dug around, and actually read the Old Testament, and not just those cherry picked by the administration, I was shocked.

Dawkins was telling the truth. God touts his jealousy of other gods. Acting like a giant man-child, he doles out unjust punishments in Biblical sized proportions. He makes women second class citizens. He kills entire ethnicities, and favors his own tribe. Indeed as the church says, God's way was to make his own nation, and exclude everyone else who isn't part of that nation. That much is said in worship service.

When the church picks verses in the Old Testament to support teachings and guidelines of the church, conscientious humans can't dismiss this parts of the package. We sell this image of God wholesale.

### **And the church claims this is the god we serve?**

Realizing this, was enough for me to begin my break away from the church. How can I, with good conscience, serve a god this vile? But at the same time, again, with my indoctrination in the church, I told myself, maybe I got this wrong. The gaslight still held me. Maybe I was the crazy one here. The idea that I would have nowhere to go outside of Church, as if Church was an Island at sea surrounded by an infinite ocean.

### **And so I asked the next question; What is the history of God?**

## Chapter 7

If God is the creator of the entire vastness of existence, what made a bunch of sheep herders and tribesmen in the middle and near east so special, that he revealed his entire set of knowledge to them, and not to anyone else in the world? And what's the likeliness of this God, in the billions and billions of light years of space, care about an infinitesimal dot within that ocean so much, that he would act just like them.

Let's start with the sheep herders; The Prophets.

Isaiah is one of our favorites. He was a man filled with the sheer “Otherness” of God. This psychological effect is called *mysterium terribile et fascinans*.

What we in effect, would call the feeling of the Holy Spirit. He is my first pick to analyze because he says an integral prophecy related to the founder of the church, Felix Y Manalo. One can argue that he indeed was a prophet, knowledgeable to the mind of God.

Isaiah was a compassionate man, and he had the poor at heart. He also felt like the Israelites have lost their way. And so began the premise for his written accords detailing the fall of Israel, and the impending doom and promise foretold. Then we have Amos, and Hosea, and Ezekiel, all compassionate men, all had different thoughts about the world around them.

One must ask this question: If indeed God is all the same God, why did with each prophet have slightly different attitudes from the same God?

Indeed the common link is their human observations. It makes more sense, that instead of being the same God, they all knew Yahweh, but projected their own agendas onto God in order to whip their listeners into shape.

If you research enough, you realize that every author in the Old Testament has reacted to their surroundings, and projected their beliefs, biases, and world view into an image of God. God has always been a blank slate of the universal consciousness, but what God does, is elevate the ideas of man beyond the reproach of human criticism.

I know what you might say. But so much of the bible explains creation! It explains human history! How can God be random assortments of ideas but be consistent throughout history of creation?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Noah:**

Let us start with the story of Noah. We commonly hear this in service. As you know, the INC believes that it is the only path to salvation, and everything outside of that is doomed to perish on Judgement day. The administration uses Noah’s Ark as an analogy; the church is the ark, and everything outside it will perished.

Noah’s Ark is considered as a precedent to “Salvation only here”. The church doesn’t address the entire story, nor does it acknowledge that it’s a story passed from other cultures. The church takes ownership of it because it proves their point.

### **Sodom and Gomorrah:**

The administration also uses this quite a bit. Especially the bit where Lot’s wife turns into a pillar of Salt. A morality story to scare people into never looking back on their salvation. But what the Administration doesn’t highlight, is the insanity of Lot, for offering his daughters to the raving

outsiders to get them to leave him alone. And later, he fucks them himself. If this is the kind of man that gets saved by god, then I don't want to serve this god.

The church cherry picks the stories that prove their point, while omitting the rest of the story that doesn't fit their narrative.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Who is Felix Y Manalo?**

A movie just came out highlighting his endeavors. Anyone who would watch this movie realizes that this more propaganda piece than it is an honest biography of the man. It's painted in sepia tones, simple and straight forward plot points and melodramatic, uncontroversial acting. There isn't much to this man that's not already turned into legend. In fact as I was growing up, he was revered much like a hero in an epic story.

I realized he echoed the Hero's journey. It is common INC knowledge that he became dissatisfied with the Catholic Church and broke away from it. He then journeyed on to different religious groups, and eventually ended up in the Seventh-Day Adventist church in 1911. He then became dissatisfied with them and joined a group of atheists and freethinkers who all rejected organized religion.

But then one time in November 1913, he secluded himself for three days and three nights. And came out with a brand new religion. 28 fundamentals, and the current host of beliefs. The "three days and three nights" thing caught my attention. It seems to echo the three days of Jesus from the burial tomb. And then I realized, by applying the "Hero's journey" to Felix Y Manalo, I would find that the written history about him resembled more closely an epic story we in the church has accepted as part of our cultural history than it did an honest biography. This has been, more enforced in recent years by the biography on the same name "Felix Manalo".

### **So what made the man and what made the legend?**

When I started to look at the Seventh Day Adventist, I also noticed a pattern. They also believe in a Judgement Day. And not just a judgement day, but one that is always imminent, always at the door step, as we would always hear in service.

- 28 fundamental lessons (the numbers are the same)
- Segregation of Gender in Worship Service
- Abstinence from Alcohol, Tobacco, etc
- Holy Supper and use of Unleavened Bread and Unfermented Grape Juice
- Many INC hymns that point back to SDA hymns. Check out Youtube.
- Angels are Human Messengers
- The call to come out of Babylon (the catholic church)
- The angel warns about the mark of the beast (Adventist think its Sunday WS, INC was sign of the cross)
- Lifelong partnership of Marriage

- No Extra-Marital cohabitation
- No body Piercings or Tattoos
- No Dancing
- No Playing cards
- Baptism by Immersion, only after fundamental proper instruction
- Lake of Fire, specific in this terminology
- Referring to the Catholic Church as Babylon, and the Adventist church as a Remnant church, defined by it's unique, end time-gospel proclamation.
- The political organization and administration
- Offerings passed up to the administration
- Deacons and Deaconesses

The coincidence can't be ignored. It was as if someone plagiarized an entire religion and changed around the names to turn it into their own brand of religion. This is significant because growing up, we were always advertised to be unique, and that the re-establishment was divine instruction from God. Much like Joseph Smith and his golden tablets of Mormon fame. It's basically the Filipino Seventh Adventist church, with a bit of nationalism and focus on anti-Catholicism on top.

So, if we know that FYM took SDA traits, how does the INC preach its words?

## Chapter 10

First of all, when they try to recruit members, they look specifically for other Christians, especially in poorer areas. Poor folks tend to have more benefit by joining the church. They ask you to question your religion and invite you to a bible indoctrination.

There has always been an emphasis on propagation, but as of late, under the third leader, there is a huge shift towards this propagation. They claim that the end is coming soon, and that we should up these numbers as much as possible.

If you're already a member, they require you to go worship service twice a week. And in ever service, the same words like "constantly" would be repeated, as if we were developing a brand. They made sure you never missed worship service. They made sure you never missed an offering. In order to get into the Holy City, you'd have to constantly do these things. Varying your dedication meant you weren't worthy.

They also quite often, tell the congregation that members are "so united, so devoted" etc. They use large social group tactics like this to tell the congregation this as if it was a fact. Deviation from this indicated that the individual member lacks the same spirit and enthusiasm everyone else has. However, from my private individual conversations with many people, this is not quite true. But stepping out of line in such a group focused group is social suicide. "Unity" and "Constant" were absolutes.

One of the most grievous sins you can do is miss the worship service. It was breaking the unity you shared with your congregation and it was breaking the constant attendance you were to give.



This verse is often quoted: Hebrew 10:25-27

<sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together,\*as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

<sup>26</sup> If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,

<sup>27</sup> but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.\*  
This is often read, just like this. I made sure to note the space in between 25 and 26 because they belong to two different paragraphs.

It makes it seem like, forsaking the worship service will lead to the fearful expectation of judgement and raging fire. However, if you look at the context of the entire chapter, this chapter talks about Jesus' sacrifice for the covenant, and turning your back on this covenant to worship like the old ways was tantamount to turning your back on Jesus, and on salvation. It has nothing to do with actually forsaking the worship service. The bit of advice was just that, advice.

## Chapter 11

The church is filled with posters and propaganda.

There has been this huge trend to venerating the leader. During Erano's time, there was less emphasis on this. But as time has gone on, campaigns like "One with EVM" has emerged to show solidarity with the leader.

They often have all media focused on EVM now. It felt like I was worshipping the leader, instead of God. Some worship services are done by Webex. The show a worship service where EVM preached. This usually takes the place of worship services on Sunday. His face and thumbprint insignia is ever where like a Big Brother.

I grew up during Erano G Manalo administration. We never prayed for EGM like we do for EVM. We never saw EGM preach or come to our district. EVM tries to make as much of a show like a celebrity. Everything done is to make the Leader happy. You make him unhappy, you make God unhappy.

Worship services are like this:

"You know how passionate they are about God. They cry while they pray, cry while they sing, cry about judgement day, cry while asking God to forgive them -- the works. I'm so done with it."

A lot of times, they will often talk about their numbers. The amount of chapels they've constructed, the amount of members worldwide, and the number of countries they are in like it's supposed to impress someone. They often claim to be the fastest growing religion, and from going from east to west, west to east.

However, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. INC hold about 2.5% of the population of the PI. Worldwide numbers are unknown.

The fastest growing Christian religions are actually the Jehovah's witnesses and the Church of Latter Day Saints. It seems the more cult like it is, the faster it grows.

They have tried to gain notoriety by making their presences' known through their chapels and temples. There's usually one in every major city around the world. They just recently completed the "largest stadium" in the world. Apparently, this is something to boast over. Even to my original Iglesia sensibilities, this seemed awfully out of step.

The administration generally doesn't tolerate dissent. Questions are welcomed to a certain degree, but any criticism tends to be met with harshly. Usually character assassination in the form of a publicly read expulsion.

The administration regularly tells the members that the administration should be obeyed without question. The administration has its best interest for you. Unquestioning faith is always a huge thing in the church. That rhetoric has been inserted everywhere, from the posters that adorn the walls, to the hymns that are sung and the lessons itself.

The church regular runs magazines, radio and television shows. I was pretty involved in INCMedia and wanted to film these touching stories of brethren. But from what I could tell, it was screened heavily because, again, there was a brand the church wanted to maintain.

I remember being interviewed one time. People loved my interview because I was very real about my experiences, but said it in my own way. I was quirky, and I looked unique. My interviews were shot down. I didn't fit a certain type of rhetoric in the way I speak and my hair was an issue to them.

There are three big events yearly. One is Holy Supper which commemorates the death of Christ, the other two are the "anniversary" thanksgiving and a year-end thanksgiving. Both of the thanksgivings generate a lot of money for new chapels, we are told. It gets sent to the administration.

They are currently increasing their ministerial schools. Before, they had to go to the PI in order to be taught in the ordination. Now they've established a school in California. I've heard horror stories from people who go there and come back. Often, these students get treated like crap, and put under the test to become a minister. Much like a fresh recruit in the army, the administration breaks these students down so they can mold them to be Soldiers of Christ. They do this in various ways. The first and second years tend to be treated with very little amenities. Computers, internet, and other things that allow them access to the outside world are forbidden. Things only get better, the longer you are there.

Most of their recruits in the PI however, usually tend to come from very poor areas. They see the ministry as a way out of their poverty, since the INC cares for their ministers as a whole.

All these things increase their presence.

## Chapter 12

The church is filled with guilt, fear and shame.

Kids, such as myself, were often indoctrinated in Sunday school using the socratic method of question and answer. They differentiate themselves from the Catholic Church by baptizing kids at 12 years old after they are “old enough” to be indoctrinated, unlike the Catholics who baptized their babies.

Of course, that isn’t really old enough for anything. That age is just old enough to leave an impression, without equipping the kid with the critical thinking means to fight manipulation. They are just old enough to say “Yes, I believe”.

Families are easier kept than individual members. Church tends to become the central activity for families. On one hand, it feels all nice and good to have your family, to be guaranteed salvation. But the moment someone goes astray, the parents can be punished for the mistakes of their children.

There has been a track record show where parents are stripped of their offices, despite being devout. For many officers, people are told that if they are given a gift from god like an office. If they give up the office, this becomes a “death” for them because it was as if they abandoned the post of watchmen for the nation of God.

Disowning a family is preferred for the good of the church.

There is different social circles within the church. Lay members are the bottom, while officers are the mid tier, and the ministers are the highest. Guilt culture runs rampantly in the church. We are often told we should be better than the layman of the church. And not only that, we should be the examples.

The officers were always told they weren’t doing enough. And if they did “enough”, it was because the glory belonged to God. Choir practice was usually endless, taking up a huge chunk of time. The usual saying was, “The more time you dedicate towards doing the commands of God, the less time you have doing things against God”.

The treatment of Expelled or excommunicated members is telling. They publicly denounce you if they catch you talking ill of the church. They will call you a detractor, like some sort of fancy word for heretic. (Detractor just means critical person, whether negative or positive).

They even, recently expelled people, some of the most religious, devout people for associating with people that were already expelled.

Gendered expectations are also huge in the church. I’ve heard of females that were once ministers in the early days of the church. However since then, the church’s official stance is that Women should keep silent in the presence of men and that they should only listen, not teach.

Women tend to be regarded as prizes in the church, evident in the teachings when they talk about marriage. Men and Women tend to have very strict gender roles; specifically, men must be the bread winners, and women perform duties in the household.

## **Chapter 13**

The church is isolated.

They are generally science deniers. They will often scoff at evolution and make fun of theories, while promoting the word of god. No surprise here. It's never been clear to me if they sincerely believe all the creationist stories down to the 6000 year old earth. But for sure, they believe in the human creation stories as outlined in Genesis.

I remember one time, taking issue with the evolutionary aspect. I put a nice drawn out letter to the INC media specialist. She said she'd get it to our "science minister" who was a scientist before becoming a minister. I checked his sources. It actually linked to the creationist foundation site!

The members all have this persecution complex. They all believe the world is against them. I feel this is another result of this inside-out tribalism.

We are constantly asked if we are "true Iglesia ni Cristo" members. A lot of services, when the lesson isn't specifically about offerings, EVM, or propagation, talk about how true we are. Do we follow all the commandments? If we break even one commandment, god says we are guilty of breaking all the commandments.

Prayer is done with eyes closed, so you don't get distracted, and a yes father and amen after every statement uttered by those saying the prayer. Apparently this says you agree with it, but I feel this is a psychological type of hypnotization. This enforces the "unity" even though you may not actually agree with what's being said.

Everything is done to keep us isolated from the outside world.

## **Chapter 14**

### **Why do people stay though?**

A lot of it has to do with social reasons, and self-interest. They never needed to question their belief because they are already comfortable. Friends are also immediate inside the church, the brother and sisterhood is a strong reason feel camaraderie. Others stay because there is something for them. Perhaps being part of the administration helps them social climb and get more out of the things they do.

## Chapter 15

### How did I treat my fellow human being?

I grew up in the church, and learned a lot of negative behaviors. First off, I always secretly distrusted non-members.

So for a long time, my interactions with “outsiders” were strained. And the more unlike me, the more bigoted I was against them. So that mainly made me a judge of people who were gay, lesbian, atheist, Satanist, etc, the more different they were from me, the more I inherently mistrusted them, and pushed them away.

Though we preach to love your fellow man, I feel like it’s a form of double speak to simultaneously drive the people you don’t or can’t agree with, especially when it comes to something like faith. What I learned, was to love only your fellow person inside the church. If outsiders didn’t want to join and be a part of us, well they can burn in hell.

## Chapter 16

### What did I conclude?

If we consider that God isn’t really the forefront of this work of salvation, then what is?

FYM grew up under the shadow of American colonialism. Resenting this, he also resented the American led Seventh Day Adventist church. He decided to make his own religion, coincidentally establishing a day before WWI. The religion created a sense of nationalist pride by making a religion by Filipinos for Filipinos.

During his time with the atheists and freethinkers, he picked up the framework for a religious organization that had yahwist, tribal and cult components. Freethinkers showed him what they disliked about religious organizations, and he incorporated them in his religion to make it stronger and more attractive to the anti-colonialist, identity starved Filipinos.

This turned into a money making job. Much like the prophesying was an occupation back in Isaiah’s time, he figured he could make some money by creating a religion. Maybe this was done the honest intention of making his fellow Filipinos better, or maybe this was done with the pure intention to scam his countrymen. I don’t know.

He asserted himself as the Messenger in 1922. This was not an original doctrine. I remember distinctly, a minister told me part of this "coming to the east, gathering from the west" doctrine wasn't read until they landed in Hawaii. I think it would be safe to say that these doctrines evolve over time. I believe a "god inspired" church would have the rules from the get go. Explaining this, and really, the entirety of religious history makes much more sense from a human history point of view, instead of a "divine history" point of view.

The many cult components brewed inside the church keeps people in, and makes it's incredibly hard to leave. This ensures a steady income stream for the church administration.

By squeezing out the less 'hardcore' members of the church, he can concentrate on the most devout members. These members are more likely to donate money because they are most involved with the tribe.

It also fits the narrative that's been told to since I can remember. That before the end of the world, many people will "leave".

## **Chapter 17**

Well it must be the end of the world. I'm one of those people that are leaving. If critical thinking is disdained by the creator, then that's a creator I will not serve. Someone always wants to you how it "really is" for your own good, but in reality, it's for their own good.

The willful misdirection, the instillation of fear and paranoia, the manipulation of emotions and general disdain for science has me running out the door. Not to mention the god preached by you is nothing but the irreproachable version of the man behind the curtain. I find no role model in such a god.

I recognized an abusive relationship for what it is.

The fact that I feel like I'm escaping is telling! The fact that I'm scared to speak up means this organization is out of control. I doubt if this church was truly of God, it would even care about controlling members so much.

I close with this:I have a hundred or so years to figure out why I'm here. With the limited communication and understanding I've been given, the odds are stacked against me finding and verifying the "narrow path" which God wants me to take. If I make this mistake, then god throws me into eternal damnation?

Then either that God's concept of good is so beyond average human morality, that I was doomed in the first place. Or that God is actually powerless against the rules, and can't save me, despite my honest attempt to live a good life.

Good luck with your salvation. May it be, you save yourself in this lifetime, and not the next.